

**Agency:** 495 Department of Agriculture

**Decision Package Code/Title:** N0 Restore Food Assistance Funding

**Budget Period:** 2015-17

**Budget Level:** PL - Performance Level

### Recommendation Summary Text:

This proposal restores \$600,000 (annually) in state general fund support to the emergency food system through WSDA's Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP). Under a separate proposal, WSDA proposed a reduction of \$600,000 as part of the 15% reduction options for the 2015-2017 biennium. This proposal would restore 1.6 million meals each year for some of the most vulnerable people in Washington. This restoration avoids reductions that may cause some food pantries to close, and supports efforts to ensure healthier food options are available to all Washingtonians.

### Fiscal Detail

Operating Expenditures	<u>FY 2016</u>	<u>FY 2017</u>	<u>Total</u>
001-1 General Fund - Basic Account-State	600,000	600,000	1,200,000
<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>600,000</b>	<b>600,000</b>	<b>1,200,000</b>

### Package Description:

About one in five Washingtonians rely on the emergency food system that is directly supported by WSDA resources. Food Assistance Program food pantries provided over 134 million pounds of food to clients in FY 2014. This is the equivalent of almost 90 million meals to feed Washington's hungry. Providers served 1.4 million people who visited an average of 6.3 times per year, for a total of 8.7 million visits. This is an increase of 4% in visits from the previous year and an increase of 45% since 2007. In 2014, 35% of visits were children aged 18 and under, and 20% were seniors aged 55 and older. Compared to the previous year, the pounds per client available with each visit decreased in 2014 from 15.84 lbs to 15.41 lbs. For an average family of 3 making 6 visits per year to their local food pantry, that means 6 fewer pounds of food per year - at current program funding levels.

Thanks to the generosity of food donors, our state's food pantries are able to provide a typical meal for an average cost of just \$0.37. The conservative donation value of the same typical meal is \$2.49 - giving the state an opportunity to invest in an emergency food system that is leveraging its resources to provide more than six times their original value.

Restoring funding of \$600,000 annually will support the emergency food system through our state funded Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP). The majority of this funding will be passed through to over 330 local food providers. A small amount will support pilot projects in the emergency food system and the agricultural community. The proposed restoration would mean 1.6 million meals available for our most vulnerable Washingtonians. This funding restoration would enhance the ability of food providers to provide not just more food but more nutritious food.

### Narrative Justification and Impact Statement

***What specific performance outcomes does the agency expect?***

The expected outcomes of the proposal are:

\*To provide critical funding support to food banks and food pantries that are struggling to fill the growing "hunger" gap as more low-income people are relying on them to provide more food just to get by.

\*Increase the amount of healthier food options being made to low-income families through food banks, food pantries and meal programs. This supports Governor's Goal # 4: Healthy and Safe Communities.

\*Develop critical pilots and partnerships that increase our collective efforts to eliminate hunger, increase healthier food options and enhance the purchasing and donating relationships between the agricultural community and the emergency food system.

**Performance Measure Detail**

**Activity:**

**Incremental Changes**

No measures submitted for package

***Is this decision package essential to implement a strategy identified in the agency's strategic plan?***

This proposal supports WSDA's mission to serve the people of Washington by supporting the agricultural community and promoting consumer and environmental protection. It is our role to defend the safety, integrity, and availability of our food system; the emergency food system is critical to a healthy food system.

***Does this DP provide essential support to one or more of the Governor's Results Washington priorities?***

This proposal is in alignment with, and supports Goal 4: Healthy and Safe Communities of the Governor's priorities that focus on ensuring all Washingtonians are healthy, safe, and supported. WSDA's indicator for Goal 4 focuses on increasing the percentage of healthier food options being offered to low-income children and families through food pantries, farmers markets, and meal programs by 5% from 2014 baseline by 2017.

This will be the first time in the program's history that it will be tracking not just the total amount of foods distributed but also by food category (type). This will provide valuable data in understanding potential gaps and targeted solutions.

This proposal indirectly supports the intent of Goal 1: World-Class Education by providing healthier food options for children. Healthier food supports children's ability to achieve a world-class education. This proposal also supports Goal 2: Prosperous Economy by developing enhanced relationships of purchasing and donating between farmers and emergency food providers.

***What are the other important connections or impacts related to this proposal?***

In FY 2014 tribes provided almost 29,000 people with food from their food banks (including new and returning clients). Because tribes have so few resources for these programs, the number of people they serve is directly proportional to the funding they receive from EFAP, making an increase in funding extremely important to them.

As reductions to the safety net continue in the state and federal arenas low-income families will turn to food pantries for help more often. We have been working with our partner agencies (DOH, DSHS, and OSPI) to determine what the impact of additional support will mean for the client.

The importance of the restored funding cannot be overstated when addressing the ability of food providers to meet the reporting requirements and the improved client outcomes referenced in Goal 4, which focuses on increasing the amount of healthier food options being offered to clients.

***What alternatives were explored by the agency, and why was this alternative chosen?***

With reductions in federal funding and reductions in other safety net assistance programs, a negative impact on food pantries is

inevitable and there are few if any alternatives left in assisting families in need of food assistance.

***What are the consequences of adopting or not adopting this package?***

If this proposal is not funded, less food will be available for Washingtonians in need of food assistance, including foods which are considered healthier. Food providers' ability to provide enough food and maintain the same level of access would be compromised. Providers are reporting that flexible funding is declining, while expenses (like food, storage, trucking, and fuel) and client need continue to rise.

Even at current funding levels, the pounds of food per person per visit decreased by 0.4 pounds in 2014. For an average size family that makes 6 visits per year to their local food pantry, that means about 6 fewer pounds of food per year. Restoring this lost food would require an overall increase of \$935,518 annually from our 2014 funding level. This figure conservatively assumes no increase in the total number of visits, which is unlikely given recent upward trends. Allowing food assistance funding to slip would only make the problem worse.

***What is the relationship, if any, to the state's capital budget?***

None

***What changes would be required to existing statutes, rules, or contracts, in order to implement the change?***

None

***Expenditure and revenue calculations and assumptions***

This proposal is strictly for pass-through to emergency food providers.

***Which costs and functions are one-time? Which are ongoing? What are the budget impacts in future biennia?***

All costs are assumed to be ongoing.

<b><u>Object Detail</u></b>		<b><u>FY 2016</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2017</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>
N	Grants, Benefits & Client Services	600,000	600,000	1,200,000